



2011 Session Report to the 46th Legislative District

August 2011

PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7818

[To send me an e-mail, click here.](#)

[To go to my website, click here.](#)

[Please click here to join my e-memo list.](#)

Committees:

- Community Development & Housing (*Chair*)
- Labor & Workforce Development
- Ways & Means

Toll-free Hotline:
1-800-562-6000

TTY-TDD (hearing-impaired):
1-800-635-9993

Dear neighbors,

I don't remember a more heart-wrenching session in the years I've had the privilege of serving the good people of the 46th Legislative District. We had to make another round of deep cuts to balance our budget within our existing means. And these cuts went far beyond tightening the belt.

There was no painless way to cut \$4.5 billion from the state budget because every line item isn't just numbers on a page. It's children in our public schools, vulnerable adults and the elderly in our nursing homes, moms and dads struggling to find a job, and college students trying to afford tuition.

While this legislative session was indeed grueling, we listened to our constituents and focused our efforts in Olympia on maintaining core programs and services until times get better.

This newsletter includes summaries of the numerous bills we passed to help us make it out of this recession with a stronger economy.

It is a great honor to serve as your representative as we grapple with the issues that concern our communities. I am keenly aware that to perform my legislative responsibilities to the best of my ability I need your input, so please don't hesitate to contact me with your comments and ideas. I truly appreciate hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Rep. Phyllis Gutiérrez Kenney

On the small business front...

More help for small-businesses

Washington's 34 Associate Development Organizations (ADOs) are the state's main local partners in economic development efforts. They fueled more than 6,600 jobs and \$1 billion of private investment in 2009-10. They'll soon help even more businesses, because new guidelines ([HB 1916](#)) ensure that ADOs reach out to **all** businesses—including the small ones. The Department of Commerce will also train ADOs in available business and export-related services, which will help more small and medium-sized businesses, expand sales through exports.



Bonds to help small and medium-sized businesses

The Washington Economic Development Finance Authority (WEDFA) issues bonds to help small and medium-sized businesses meet capital needs. These low cost, tax exempt bonds cost taxpayers nothing and have supported over 8,000 jobs since the program started. This session, a new law ([SB 5367](#)) will increase the bonding capacity 50 percent—to \$1.5 billion—to help even more businesses in the future.

Farmers' markets



Washington is the second wine producer in the nation and our wine industry contributes more than \$3 billion to the state economy. And as far as beer goes, there are more than 140 microbreweries in our state. To support these great job-creating industries and to give a boost to farmers' markets, this session I sponsored a bill ([HB 1172](#)) that authorizes beer and wine tastings at up to ten farmers markets across the state. The new law includes safeguards to prevent problems and will help create job opportunities in all parts of the state.

Education

A recent report by the Higher Education Coordinating Board indicates that, despite the recession, the number of job openings for people who receive degrees in high-demand fields is increasing; the bad news is that there are way more job openings than qualified workers to fill them.

By the year 2018, 67 percent of all jobs in our state will require some postsecondary education. About 20 percent of those jobs will require some college but no degree, and about 47 percent will require an associate degree or higher.

The difference in the quality of life between a worker with a bachelor's degree and one with only a high school diploma is that the one with the degree will earn about 75 percent more than the other one. Over a lifetime, the gap in earnings between those with only a high school diploma and those with a bachelor's degree or higher exceeds \$1 million.



We need to increase access to higher education because Washington employers are hurting for skilled workers, and because Washington families are hurting for better futures.

This session we took some important steps to increase access to higher education:

Western Governor's University

We passed a bill ([HB 1822](#)) that develops an accredited non-profit online university to allow more and diverse students the ability to attain training and degrees. I sponsored this measure because, at zero cost to Washington taxpayers, our WGU will:

- Allow Washington to provide increased educational opportunities to its residents.
- Meet a key state need for non-profit, affordable, online education.
- Open a wide window of opportunities for working adults who would otherwise not have a chance to get a degree.
- Offer the best of nontraditional opportunities — high quality, affordability, flexibility and reduced time to graduation.

Opening the door to higher education

I cosponsored another bill ([HB 1808](#)) that creates a 'Launch Year' program that allows students to earn a year's worth of higher education credits while still in high school. This reduces time and tuition spent in college. Community, technical and four-year institutions will also coordinate and publish qualifying class lists and credits toward a degree.

Expanding Doctorate Programs

Successful University of Washington and Washington State University branch campuses have opened across the state, helping provide needed four-year university access in local communities. We passed a bill ([HB 1586](#)) that will allow the development of doctorate programs at the branch campuses.

Three-Year College Degrees

Students able to graduate in less time incur lower tuition and related costs and open spaces for other students. This bill ([SB 5442](#)) allows state and regional universities to provide three-year baccalaureate programs to students, if approved by the Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Training workers for good aerospace jobs

Washington's 650 aerospace companies and skilled workers made us a world leader in aviation and living-wage aerospace jobs. Thanks to a new law ([HB 1846](#)), we now have a student loan program tailored for people who need financial help to pursue training at the Washington Aerospace Training and Research Center and Spokane Aerospace Technology Center.

This past May, Gov. Gregoire announced a new \$3 million investment to further bolster aerospace training and enroll new students. These steps will help us remain a world leader in aerospace for decades to come.



Housing

The current recession and the unprecedented wave of foreclosures in our state have increased the number of people who have nowhere to turn and are out on the street without a roof over their heads night after night.

This session we passed legislation to protect homeowners and make smart investments toward affordable housing:



The Foreclosure Fairness Act of 2011

It's an American dream to own a home. But more than 75,000 Washington families have been swept from their homes by foreclosures during this recession and another 30,000 families might lose their homes this year. If you or someone you know is facing foreclosure, help is here.

The Foreclosure Fairness Act of 2011 ([HB 1362](#)), which I co-sponsored, helps homeowners by providing housing counselors to walk them through the process. Homeowners also have the opportunity to meet with the lender and a mediator to determine the best course of action.

**To find a counselor now, please call Washington State's
foreclosure prevention hotline:
1-877-894-HOME (1-877-894-4663)**

Visit the [program's website](#) for more information on how to get the help you need.

Housing Trust Fund

In the Capital Budget ([HB 1497](#)) we're investing \$50 million into the Housing Trust Fund. In addition to building and renovating affordable housing across the state, this important program generates construction jobs immediately, and leverages significant amounts of additional funding in our communities.

Protecting manufactured housing communities

Manufactured and mobile homes provide an important source of affordable housing for low income and senior citizens. I cosponsored a measure ([HB 1502](#)) to protect local governments' ability to make land use and zoning decisions, while simultaneously ensuring that jurisdictions cannot use those tools to prevent the entry or removal of mobile homes into legal mobile home parks.

The human trafficking nightmare

More than 12 million people worldwide are forced into manual labor or are sexually exploited; of these, 100,000 people are trafficked into the U.S. each year. We've come a long way addressing this problem, in fact, we're the leader among all states due to our work to protect mail-order brides, improve services for trafficking victims, prohibit sex tourism, require employers of foreign workers to disclose labor laws to their employees, and create an informational poster campaign on domestic trafficking at highway rest stops along Interstate 5.



This year we're building on those previous achievements with new laws to help combat human slavery and save lives:

Phone-taps in human trafficking cases

A new law ([HB 1874](#)) will allow surveillance operations on suspected human-trafficking and child-prostitution activities with only the consent of the victim, instead of having to get the consent of both parties involved. This law also authorizes prosecutors to request assistance from juveniles in the undercover surveillance of telephone communications without putting them in danger.

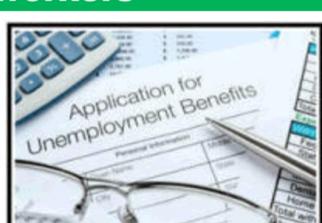
Expanding definitions to increase convictions

Another measure ([SB 5546](#)) adds transporting a person for the future purpose of prostitution--including of minors, or forced manual labor--to our trafficking law. And the criminal definition of human trafficking now also includes the illegal harvesting or sale of human organs.

Help for trafficking victims

Housing assistance is often limited to women only or domestic violence cases, which renders many human trafficking victims ineligible for these services. We passed a bill ([SB 5482](#)) that authorizes local governments to use affordable housing funds to provide housing assistance to victims of human trafficking and their families.

Reforming unemployment insurance to help businesses and workers



Early in the session we worked very hard on a bill ([HB 1091](#)) that reforms the UI system to permanently reduce unemployment insurance taxes for more than 90 percent of Washington's employers--saving them nearly \$300 million this year alone. Unemployed workers also win, with a temporary \$25 boost in weekly benefits for new claimants in 2011. These expanded benefits will not harm the UI trust fund or raise employers' rates. The new law also makes training programs more accessible, allowing more workers to learn new skills for their job search in high-demand fields.

Workers' Compensation Reform

Never had our 100-year-run workers' compensation system been reformed to the extent that it was this session. While the bill ([HB 2123](#)) passed by the Legislature does make a few improvements to the system (it helps get injured workers the care they need so they can get back to work sooner and it also helps keep the costs lower for employers), I couldn't in good conscience vote in favor of this measure. In my opinion, the new law goes too far in the wrong direction. It includes a major concession in workers' benefits --a radical policy change that allows injured workers to receive a smaller settlement amount, a payout, in order to settle claims more quickly. To me, this will undoubtedly undermine our system of "sure and certain relief" for injured workers.

Operating Budget

The session was dominated by the 2011-13 operating budget and the current economic climate that has resulted from the worst recession in 75 years. This biennial budget includes \$4.5 billion in deep cuts that will touch real lives. No area of the budget was left untouched. While some programs were cut, we were able to keep programs alive with some funding. We are hoping that the economic situation gets better and we can restore funds for those programs that are so critical to many of our citizens. For all the details on the Operating Budget please go to the [LEAP website](#).

Capital Budget

The Capital Budget funds important assets and infrastructure like schools, housing, parks, sewers and vital community building projects. This year the capital budget plays a major role in an effort to help jumpstart the economy.

These are the construction projects in the 46th Legislative District:

Building for the Arts Grants (Seattle Musical Theater)	\$163,000
Roof Repairs "A" (North Seattle Community College)	\$78,000
Minor Works - Preservation (North Seattle Community College)	\$462,000
Facility Repairs "A" (North Seattle Community College)	\$347,000
Site Repairs "A" (North Seattle Community College)	\$283,000
Minor Works - Program (North Seattle Community College)	\$702,000
Seattle Children's Hospital Emergency Department	\$1,000,000
Traumatic Brain Injury Center	\$900,000
46th legislative District Total:	\$3,935,000

Transportation Budget

Although Washington will collect less revenue for transportation purposes than in previous years, a strong bipartisan approach developed a budget that will create over 40,000 jobs across the state.

These are the 2011-2013 transportation projects in our area:

Highway Improvements Program -- Environmental retrofit I-5/5th Ave NE to NE 92nd St -- Noise Wall	\$138,000
Highway Preservation Program -- Structures Preservation I-5/Downtown Seattle Sign Bridges	\$727,000
46th legislative District Total:	\$865,000

e-mail:

phyllis.kenney@leg.wa.gov

website:

<http://www.housedemocrats.wa.gov/roster/rep-phyllis-gutierrez-kenney/>

Please join my e-memo list:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/subscriptions/member.aspx?chamber=h&member=gutierrez-kenney>

This message is intended for constituents in the 46th Legislative District. If you've received this in error or would like to be removed, please use the link at the end of this message to 'be removed from this mailing list.

Government, nonprofit, and political organizations are exempt from the CAN-SPAM Act. If you would like more information, please click on this link, <http://usefularts.us/2008/03/03/email-law-can-spam-faq-for-internet-marketers/>

or <http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/15C103.txt>

[Click here](#) to be removed from this mailing list.